

HAB National Liaison Report

June 2021

DOE-HQ

DOE will keep a focus on End State Contracting in 2021 and is now working out how to flesh out how it is supposed to work. They will define how priorities are established and clarify roles and responsibilities of each entity within DOE as well as provide a strategic view to stakeholders. The approach is front-loaded toward immediate tasks in the first year or so of the contract. Factors such as key bosses, management approach and contractor performance on other contracts is weighed heavily as is cost.

The contracting model envisions a single award indefinite delivery, indefinite quantity contract for each acquisition, with the ability to issue both cost-reimbursement and firm-fixed-price task orders according to DOE. It is supposed to yield a more risk-based approach for discrete scopes of work for more realistic, reliable pricing.

The Waste Isolation Pilot Plant (WIPP) – Special Report

In April DOE halted transuranic or TRU waste shipments from Los Alamos to the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant in New Mexico (NM) after sparks from a waste drum prompted evacuations at both Los Alamos and the disposal site. Sparking was observed after a “metal waste item” was placed into the drum with 2 high –efficiency particulate HEPA filters. A study concluded that the crew did not recognize that welding titanium in an inert glovebox could result in a heightened risk of spontaneous ignition. In the future they will remove titanium fines from the TRU Waste stream.

Idaho will remain the top priority for WIPP shipments until all legacy TRU waste is shipped to NM including buried waste from places like Rocky Flats. They will continue shipping until approx. 2030.

The revival of an underground ventilation fan that has been idle for years is targeted for late July. DOE says that operation of the fan poses scant radiological risks. A test showed that the dose from the fan is no more than the annual dose one might receive from owning a smoke detector. The fan will provide temporary improvement to underground ventilation until a permanent ventilation upgrade is installed.

A WIPP Permit modification is under consideration by NM to construct a new air intake shaft. The shaft in tandem with the new ventilation system will enable WIPP to again multitask by doing waste emplacement, maintenance and salt mining at the same time.

DOE has announced a supplemental analysis for the construction of **2 new disposal panels** ¼ th mile west of the current panels. It showed the existing environmental impact statement for the mine remains adequate for the new panels. Each panel will have 7 disposal rooms measuring 300 feet long by 33 feet wide and 13 feet high. New Panel 8 is supposed to be ready by January 2022.

We had previously heard that the **volume of waste** in the mine was calculated by the external size of waste containers, not what was inside them. WIPP requested that the volume of waste be based on actual waste. This was approved. Previously, based on container size there was 100,000 cubic meters of waste in the mine. Now, measuring the volume of waste the total is 60,000 cu me. The Land Withdrawal Act allows 6.2 million cu ft. of waste to be stored in WIPP.

The WIPP Management & Operations contractor staffs a “Central Characterization Project”, the CCP”. There is a representative from each of the shipping sites. They oversee characterization of waste to be sure it meets WIPP criteria. They also monitor what waste is ready to ship.

Los Alamos, NM

Contaminated wood and other material were discovered in February 2020 on a 28 acre piece of land the Los Alamos lab transferred to the county in 2018. The county was in the process of putting in a sewer line for a new housing complex. No contamination has been found in the area planned for housing.

In April, 2021, the NM Environment Department gave it’s blessing to a DOE plan to begin remediation of radioactive contamination along a public road just outside of Los Alamos Lab property.

Idaho

The Idaho Site is still not ready to begin treating sodium-bearing waste at the Idaho Site. Startup is expected near the end of the calendar year. **Oak Ridge – Y12 a manufacturing facility for the national nuclear deterrent. They also retrieve and store nuclear materials**

In order to facilitate demolition of old dilapidated and contaminated buildings DOE will cut 70 acres from the footprint of the 150 acre Protected Area. This will make it easier for workers to access facilities they are tearing down. They will install a new Entry Control Facility and a vehicle portal.

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DOE plans to build a new landfill to take low-risk construction material from building demolition at Y-12 and the Oak Ridge National laboratory. The current 28 acre Waste Management Facility that opened in 2002 is 80% full and will reach capacity around 2027. Most of the material there came from demolition of the K-25 gaseous diffusion plant complex. Both the existing and planned landfills are regulated under CERCLA. There remain more than 300

buildings to be torn down. Both landfills were designed to take low-level radiological waste or chemical-contaminated soil and demolition debris and equipment.

DOE says the new facility will be in keeping with DOE policy to dispose of most high-volume waste and debris inside the DOE complex while providing off-site disposal for low-volume, higher radionuclide waste. A remaining issue of concern is how mercury will be handled from contaminated Y-12 facilities.

Savannah River Site

The Salt Waste Processing Facility (SWPF) that handles the majority of their tank waste shutdown in late March due to unacceptably high levels of residual organic solvent which is used to remove cesium from tank waste. It was found in the decontaminated salt solution produced by SWPF. To fix the problem they replaced internal components of the coalesce equipment. SWPF was built to treat 90% of remaining tank waste by separating highly-radioactive elements including cesium and strontium from less radioactive material. The High-activity waste is then moved to their vitrification facility.